

New Leadership Makes Summit Seem Doubtful

Associated Press

The Soviet leadership change has left the United States in doubt about whether Moscow wants a summit meeting this year between President Reagan and Soviet chief Konstantin U. Chernenko, a top State Department official said yesterday.

Richard R. Burt, assistant secretary of state for European affairs, told a congressional panel that the Reagan administration has yet to notice any encouraging moves from the Soviet Union other than "general statements" since the death of President Yuri V. Andropov.

"We don't have any evidence that they're prepared for a genuine improvement in the relationship that would require them to meet us halfway," Burt told the House Foreign Affairs Committee's subcommittee on Europe.

But, he said, "if the Soviets mean what they say" there is hope for progress. "We are ready certainly on our part to engage the Soviets in real dialogue on all the issues."

The administration continues to insist that any summit conference be carefully prepared, he said. "We are not interested in a cosmetic or an atmospheric meeting. We want a meeting that can produce something," Burt said. "The Soviet view, of course, on the summit is very unclear at the current time because of the new leader."

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